

Message Text

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652; GDS
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, LE
SUBJ: SYRIAN INTENTIONS IN LEBANON

1. WE SEE NO REASON TO DOUBT THE SINCERITY OF VARIOUS SYRIAN STATEMENTS THAT THEY ARE MERELY TRYING TO RESTORE LAW AND ORDER AND SUPPORT THE SARKIS REGIME. THEIR SIN IS NOT MALEVOLENCE, IT IS CLUMSINESS. THEY FURTHERMORE DO NOT SEEM TO UNDERSTAND THAT BY RUNNING ROUGHSHOD OVER SARKIS' OBJECTIONS TO THEIR METHODS, THEY UNDERMINE THE REGIME THEY CLAIM TO SUPPORT, AND EXPOSE THE HOLLOWNESS OF THEIR ASSERTIONS THAT SARKIS COMMANDS THE ADF.

2. THE SYRIANS MAY NOT INTEND A TAKEOVER OF LEBANON, BUT THAT IS WHAT THEY ARE STUMBLING INTO. IF SARKIS REMAINS IN POWER WHILE THEY JACKBOOT IT ABOUT THE COUNTRY, HE BECOMES

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THEIR PUPPET. INDEED, HE IS ALREADY, IN THE SENSE THAT HE DOES NOT CONTROL THE ADF. ANYONE WHO IS ELECTED TO SUCCEED HIM IN THE SHADOW OF THE SYRIAN ARMED PRESENCE WILL BE CONSIDERED THEIR TOOL AND WILL BE UNABLE TO GOVERN EXCEPT THROUGH THEM.

3. BOUTROS UNDERSTANDS THE SYRIAN AIM TO BE TO REDUCE THE

LEBANESE FRONT AND, IN EFFECT, ELIMINATE IT AS A RIVAL TO THEMSELVES IN LEBANON. THAT WOULD LEAVE THE PALESTINIANS, THE MURABITUN, THE JUMBLATTIS AND A FEW SMALL LEFTIST GROUPS AS THE ONLY POLITICAL FORCES HERE. IT WOULD MEAN THE END OF A CHRISTIAN COUNTERBALANCE TO THE PALESTINIANS AND LEFTISTS. FEW CHRISTIANS, EXCEPT PERHAPS THE VENGEANCE-MADDENED ZGHORTIOTES, COULD SUPPORT SYRIA IN THIS, AND KHADDAM IS BADLY MISINFORMED IF HE REALLY THINKS NINETY PER CENT OF THE CHRISTIANS SUPPORT THE RECENT ACTIONS OF THE ADF.

4. WE MUST ADMIT TO CONFUSION ON THE QUESTION OF SYRIAN DEMANDS. WE UNDERSTAND THE PRESS REPORTS THAT THEY HAVE DEMANDED VARIOUS CONCESSIONS FROM THE GOL ARE UNTRUE, AND WE NOTE KHADDAM'S DENIAL, REPORTED IN DAMASCUS 3888, THAT THEY ARE ASKING THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS OF EAST BEIRUT TO DISARM, BUT IT HAS BEEN MY CLEAR IMPRESSION FROM BOUTROS THAT THIS WAS INDEED THEIR OBJECTIVE. OTHERWISE, IT IS NOT CLEAR WHY THEY ARE CONTINUING TO ENCIRCLE EAST BEIRUT, SINCE THERE HAS BEEN VERY LITTLE FIRING FOR THE PAST TWO DAYS. THEY ARE OBVIOUSLY EXERTING MILITARY PRESSURE TO SOME END. WHAT IS IT?

5. IF DISARMAMENT, OR DISPERSAL OF THE MILITIAS IS THEIR OBJECTIVE, THEY MAY BE ABLE TO OBTAIN IT MILITARILY, BUT ONLY AT GREAT COST TO EVERYONE, AND LEBANON WILL THEN EITHER PARTITION ITSELF, OR BECOME A SYRIAN PROVINCE. THE MARONITES WILL NOT WILLING REMAIN IN A STATE WHERE THEY ARE DEFENSE-
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LESS AND THE PALESTINIANS ARE HEAVILY ARMED. NO ONE HERE WILL TAKE SERIOUSLY SYRIAN PROTESTATIONS OF READINESS TO PROTECT THE CHRISTIANS AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS GIVEN THE POST SADAT-VISIT RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN SYRIAN AND THE PALESTINIANS, UNLESS THE SYRIANS ACTUALLY MOVE TO DISARM THE PALESTINIANS.

6. THE BASIC FLAW IN THE SYRIAN APPROACH APPEARS IN PARA 4 OF DAMASCUS 3888. KHADDAM SAYS IN EFFECT, "WE TOLD SARKIS TO DO ALL THESE THINGS, AND TOLD HIM TO USE THE ADF TO BRING THE CHRISTIAN DISSIDENTS UNDER CONTROL. OUR ACTIONS SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD IN THIS FRAMEWORK." HE LEFT OUT, "HE WOULDN'T DO IT SO WE DECIDED WHAT WAS BEST FOR THE COUNTRY AND DID IT OURSELVES." THAT IS CALLED TUTELAGE.

7. PERHAPS HAVING PUSHED THINGS TO THE BRINK, ASSAD WILL NOW BE PREPARED FOR A MORE FLEXIBLE APPROACH. ONE HOPES SO. ACCORDING TO BOUTROS, SARKIS' INABILITY TO GET THE SYRIANS TO MODERATE THEIR APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM WAS WHAT DROVE SARKIS TO RESIGNATION.

8. IF WE CAN CONVINCE THE SYRIANS TO WITHDRAW THEIR PAW FROM THE TRAP, THE NEXT THING WE MUST BEND OUR MINDS TO IS HOW

TO DISARM THE MILITIAS AND PALESTINIANS. THE CHRISTIANS WILL BE DIFFICULT BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE IF THE PALESTINIANS RECIPROCATE. I DISCUSSED THIS BRIEFLY WITH BOUTROS YESTERDAY (JULY 7) AND WE AGREED THERE WERE REALLY ONLY TWO POWERS WITH ANY LEVERAGE ON THE PALESTINIANS: SYRIAN AND SAUDI ARABIA. GETTING THE LATTER TO DO SOMETHING MAY BE DIFFICULT, BUT IT MAY NOT, PROVIDED WE PUT OUR MINDS TO IT AND MAKE ENOUGH OF AN EFFORT WITH THEM.

9. FORTUNATELY, THERE EXISTS THE FRAMEWORK FOR MUTUAL DISARMAMENT CONTAINED IN THE CAIRO AND RIYADH AGREEMENTS. WE SHOULD EXPLORE WITH ALL THE PARTIES THE POSSIBILITY OF THEIR REVIVAL AND IMPLEMENTATION.

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